



Press Release

USDA FOREST SERVICE

Rocky Mountain Region

740 Simms Street Golden, CO 80401

Contact: Mary Ann Chambers 970 295 6676

U.S. Forest Service and Utility Companies Proposing to Clear Powerlines of Beetle-Killed Trees

The Medicine Bow-Routt, Arapaho and Roosevelt, and White River National Forests (the three Forests) are seeking public comment on the Emergency Powerline Clearing project, a proposal to remove all dead and dying trees (i.e., hazard trees) along power lines crossing National Forest system lands in Northern Colorado. The three Forests are experiencing a bark beetle epidemic in pine forests, some spruce tree mortality from the spruce bark beetle, and significant loss of aspen trees from sudden aspen decline. Open Houses are scheduled from 5:00 to 7:00 PM as follows:

- August 26, 2009, Hahn's Peak-Bears Ears District Office, 925 Weiss Drive, Steamboat Springs, Colorado.
- August 27, 2009 Arapaho and Roosevelt National Forest Supervisor's Office, 2150 Centre Ave. Building E, Fort Collins, Colorado.
- September 2, 2009, Dillon District Office, 680 Blue River Parkway, Silverthorne, Colorado
- September 3, 2009, Park Ranger District Office, 100 Main Street, Walden, Colorado

Additional information and maps will be displayed at the open houses. Resource specialists and Forest Service managers will be there to answer questions.

"There is an imminent threat to powerlines from an increasing number of hazardous trees falling in the three forests," said Cal Wettstein, commander of the Forest Service's Bark Beetle Incident Management Team.

There are around 500 miles of distribution and transmission lines on National Forest system lands, across Northern Colorado, including around 40 miles of powerlines in roadless areas. Although the powerlines are located on National Forest system lands, they do extend into private lands located within the three Forests' boundaries. This analysis does not include actions on those private lands.

This proposal would allow the Forest Service or utility companies with powerlines on the three Forests to fell and/or remove all hazardous trees within approximately 200 feet from the centerline of transmission lines and within 75 feet of centerline of distribution lines, reducing the risk of wildfire starts caused by hazard trees falling across the powerlines. For the utility companies, this project reduces the risk to distribution and transmission lines. Forest Service Officials authorized the proposal under the Healthy Forests Restoration Act of 2003, which provides for expedited planning and decision-making for vegetation treatments on National Forest System lands that are experiencing disease or insect epidemics. Community involvement early in the planning process is a key component of the Healthy Forests Restoration Act and the Forest Service encourages public participation.

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If you cannot attend an open house but would like to participate in the development of this project, please send your comments to Mary Ann Chambers, 2150 Centre Ave, Building E, Fort Collins CO, 80526 or email to machambers@fs.fed.us. To be considered in the project analysis comments should be received prior to October 2, 2009. As it becomes available, additional information on this project can also be found on the Forest Service website at: www.fs.fed.us/r2/bark-beetle

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